

Colorado



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Mutual Aid Agreements Enhance Emergency Response

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment worked with the Colorado Attorney General's Office in 2001 to adopt a master mutual aid agreement. A new State Board of Health rule adopted that same year required all of Colorado's 15 local health departments to participate. In subsequent years, most of Colorado's county nursing services have signed the agreement as well.

The master agreement includes provisions for furnishing aid and assistance to meet the needs of county and district health departments and public health nursing services, to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from public health impacts during a disaster.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment acts as custodian for the master agreement. By November 2006, the department had signed memoranda of understanding with 25 Colorado counties, representing boards of county commissioners and/or county sheriffs). The department has ten signed agreements with warehouse facility owners, five with transportation companies, six with volunteer organizations, two with translation companies and 13 with Colorado hospitals.

Regional Collaboration

Colorado is an active participant in the ten-state "Mid America Alliance," with several representatives on the legal subcommittee. The mission of the Mid America Alliance is to provide a framework for mutual assistance among states during a situation that stresses one individual state's resources but does not initiate a governor-declared state of emergency. This alliance seeks to draft state-to-state, model mutual aid agreements that can be implemented when mutual aid is needed but a disaster has not been declared. As of April 2006, CDPHE has entered into an agreement with the Mid-America Alliance and also participated in the state-to-state Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Exercising the Mutual Aid Agreements

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment participated in Operation Iron Terminus in July 2006. Operation Iron Terminus was a full scale Strategic National Stockpile receiving, storing and staging exercise, simulating the state's response to the release of *Bacillus anthracis* on Colorado interstate highways.



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The exercise was enacted in four other states as well. Nearly 150 staff and volunteers participated, from more than 30 agencies and organizations, many of which were Colorado mutual aid partners.

Tribal Nations

Colorado recognizes the need for these agreements to be a foundation of the state's partnership with Colorado's two tribal nations as well. Colorado met with its tribal nations at a four-state, 14-tribe summit July 2005 in Durango, Colorado, to discuss response issues including legal/sovereignty concerns, drafting intergovernmental agreements and/or memoranda of understanding and joint response actions. The legal issues involved in reaching agreements with the state's two tribal nations are formidable. These issues are being addressed and progress is being made.

Ongoing Efforts

Colorado will continue to review the language of these agreements for improvement and continue to exercise the execution of these agreements during the training, drills and exercises conducted each grant year. Memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement have been prepared and negotiated with transportation companies, storage facilities, warehouse owners and volunteer agencies, so that Colorado can receive and redistribute the assets of the Strategic National Stockpile efficiently and effectively in any situation in which those assets are needed.

Supporting Documents

- "Operation Iron Terminus" After Action Report (*confidential*)



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Additional Information

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